

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3435

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BTRA, NI

SUBJ: PEPSI COLA REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE TO PELE

REF : STATE 39533

1. LOCAL PEPSI COLA MANAGER ASKED ME FEBRUARY 16 WHETHER PELE AND HIS PARTY COULD JOIN WCT STAFF AND TENNIS PLAYERS IN EVENT SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS WERE MADE TO FLY THEM OUT OF LAGOS. LATER THAT EVENING I WAS ABLE TO RAISE QUESTION WITH ALLISON AYIDA,

SUGGESTING THAT IF FMG WERE AGREEABLE, I KNEW WCT STAFF AND PLAYERS WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION TO PELE'S GROUP JOINING THEM ON SPECIAL FLIGHT TO ACCRA THE FOLLOWING MORNING. (ASHE, OKKER AND BOWOWIAXS HAD LUNCED WITH PELE AT BRAZILIAN AMBASSADOR'S ON SUNDAY.) AYIDA SUGGESTED BRAZILIAN AMBASSADOR MAKE OFFICIAL REQUEST TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY PERMSEC EBONG. I SO INFORMED AMBASSADOR LIMA AND LEARNED SUBSEQUENTLY THAT AYIDA HAD SIMILARLY CONTACTED EBONG. FOR REASONS STILL UNCLEAR, AMBASSADOR LIMA AND EBONG NEVER GOT TOGETHER IN TIME TO MAKE THE ARRANGEMENTS. SO DID AMBASSADOR LIMA INSTRUCT PELE AND PARTY ALONG LINES WE SUGGESTED, THAT IS, SHOW UP THE FOLLOWING MORNING (TUESDAY) AT THE IVOYI HOTEL RENDEZVOUS POINT AND GAMBLE ON BEING PERMITTED TO JOIN THE POLICE-LED WCT CAVALCADE TO THE AIRPORT.

2. WE ARE PERSUADED THAT WCT OBTAINED SPECIAL FACILITIES TO LEAVE
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COUNTRY BECAUSE OF HIGH LEVEL NIGERIIN PRESSURE FROM LAGOS LAWN
TENNIS CLUB AUTHORITIES
,INCLUDING AYIDA AND EBONG WHO WERE
CHAGRINED THAT TOURNAMENT WAS FORCEABLY SHUT DOWN AFTER THEY HAD
ASSURED WCT AND EMBASSY THAT FMG WANTED IT TO GO AHEAD. ANOTHER
ELEMENT WAS FACT TMKT FMG MINIRTRY OF YOUTH AND SPORTS HAD SIGNED
THE CONTRACT WITH WCT. PELE'S CASE IS SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT. WE
UNDERSTAND THAT NIGERIAN HOSTS, THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION, HAVE
BEEN FAR LESS EFFECTIVE AND INTERESTED IN MOVING THEIR CELEBRITY
OUT THAN WERE THEIR TENNIS COUNTERPARTS. LOCAL PEPSI COLA MANAGER
SUGGESTED THAT LOCAL FOOTBALL AUTHORITIES STILL HOPED THEY MIGHT
BE ABLE TO PUT ON SOME KIND OF ADDITIONAL PUBLIC PERFORMANCE BY
PELE AFTER THE PERIOD OF MOURNING IS ENDED.

3. IN VIEW OF ABOVE, COMBINED WITH PARTICULAR SENSITIVITIES OF
CURRENT POLITIMAL ENVIRONMENT, EMBASSY DOES NOT RPT NOT BELIEVE
IT SHOULD INTERCEDE WITH FMG IN THIS MATTER. CHANCES OF SUCCESS
IN OBTAINING SPECIAL PERMISSION FOR PEPSI COLA AIRCRAFT ARE, IN
OUR VIEW, SLIGHT. AT ANY RATE, WE BELIEVE IT MORE APPROPRIATE FOR
BRAZILIAN AMBASSADOR TO MAKE SUCH REQUEST THAN FOR US EMBASSY
DESPITE ROLE OF PEPSI COLA SPONSORSHIP. HAVING PUSHED THE FMG
(PARTICULARLY AYIDI AND EBONG) PRETTY HARD IN THE WCT AFFAIR,
WE WOULD HESITATE TO GO THE SAME ROUTE SO STRONG AGAIN.

4. PELE AND HIS PARTY ARE ALIVE AND WELL ALTHOUGH IMPATIENT.
BRAZILIAN AMBASSADOR HAS TOLD US HE IS DOING HIS BEST TO ASSURE
THEIR EARLY DEPARTURE AS SOON AS INTERNATION FLIGHTS ARE PERMITTED.
PELE RECEIVED GOOD PUBLICITY COVERAGE IN THIS
MORNING'S PRESS.
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